DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 115 UD 029 191

TITLE	The State of Hispanic Health, 1992. Facing the Facts.
INSTITUTION	ASPIRA Association, Inc., Washington, DC. National Office.
SPONS AGENCY	Public Health Service (DHHS), Rockville, Md.
PUB DATE	92
CONTRACT	5-D18-MB00086-18
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications, ASPIRA Association, Inc., National Office, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome; Children; Death; Demography; *Health Needs; *Hispanic Americans; Medical Education; Medical Services; Migrant Workers; Mothers; *National Surveys; Older Adults; Social Problems; Special Health Problems; *Statistical Data; Substance Abuse
IDENTIFIERS	Access to Health Care; Fact Sheets; Maternal Health; United States

ABSTRACT

This publication offers an overview of the health of Hispanic Americans in the United States. Topics covered include the following: (1) Hispanic representation in health fields; (2) access to health care; (3) maternal and child health; (4) substance abuse; (5) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and Hispanics; (6) Hispanic elderly; (7) migrant farm workers; (8) leading causes of death; and (9) availability of Hispanic health data. The paper notes that 1 out of every 10 women of reproductive age is Hispanic, that 51 percent of Hispanic women of child-bearing age have family incomes at least 200 percent below the poverty level; that 31 percent of Hispanics have no private or public health insurance compared to 12 percent of Whites and 22 percent of African Americans; and that 2 times as many Hispanics as Whites use the emergency room as a source of primary care. (Contains 15 references.) (JB)

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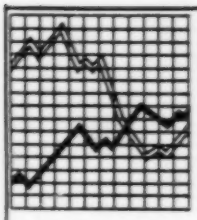

Facing the Facts

THE STATE OF HISPANIC HEALTH 1992

A Fact Sheet produced by the
ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research

Hispanic Representation in Health Fields

* According to the 1990 U.S. Census, Hispanics* comprise 9.0% of the total population. In the field of health, however, Hispanics represent only 4% of all physicians, 1.7% of dentists, 5.3% of health administrators and nutritionists, 2.9% of registered nurses, and 2.8% of Public Health Service employees. (Bureau of the Census, 1990)

* Hispanics represented only 5.2% of students enrolled in medical education in the fall of 1991. Of these, 2.1% are Mexican American and 1.9% are Puerto Rican. (Association of American Medical Colleges, November, 1991)

* Less than three percent (2.5%) of medical faculties in American Medical Schools are Hispanic. Of these, 0.3% are Mexican American and 0.7% are Puerto Rican, and 1.5% are Other Hispanics. (Association of American Medical Colleges, November, 1991)

* There are 7,000 staff members in the 12 medical centers currently performing clinical trials with National Cancer Institute (NCI) grants. Of these faculty, 23 are Hispanic. Not one of these centers has a Hispanic oncologist. (Hispanic Health, August, 1991)

Access to Health Care

* Thirty-one percent of Hispanics had no private or public health insurance, compared to 12% of Whites and 22% of African Americans. (Antonia Novello, U.S. Surgeon General, Joint Hearing before the Select Committee on Aging, United States House of Representatives, September, 1991)

* Hispanics are more often employed in jobs without health insurance benefits than are Whites. If Hispanics had the same rate of coverage as Whites, the percentage of Hispanics with no insurance at all would drop from 33% to 18%. (GAO Report: Hispanic Access to Health Care, January, 1992)

* Two times as many Hispanics as Whites use the emergency room as a source of primary care. Compared with Whites, Hispanics also have longer and more expensive hospital stays. (The Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1982-84, of the National Center for Health Statistics)

* Only 4.9% of the $7.5 billion budget of the National Institute of Health as set by Congress in 1991 was targeted towards minority underserved populations. Less than 0.05% of this money was directed towards programs addressing Hispanic health issues. (Hispanic Health, August, 1991)

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*The term Hispanic is used by all federal government agencies to refer to the grouping of Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Central and South American, and Other Latino/Hispanic subgroups, as determined by the United States Bureau of the Census. The term White refers to non-Hispanic white individuals. The term African American refers to non-Hispanic black individuals.

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Maternal and Child Health

* One out of every ten women of reproductive age (15-44) is Hispanic. (Catholics for a Free Choice, April, 1992)

* The fertility rates for Latino subgroups in 1991 were: Mexican-American, 94.5; Puerto Rican, 67.7; Cuban American, 51.1; and non-Hispanics, 64.1 births per 1,000 women ages 15-44. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Fifty-one percent of Hispanic women of childbearing age have family incomes at least 200% below the poverty level. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* The percentages of non-White women between the ages of 18 and 34 who report rarely or never using birth control are the following: African American, 35%; Hispanic, 51%; and Total non-White, 42%. (El Paso Times, September 16, 1991)

* Infant mortality rates for 1991 were Mexican American, 7.6; Puerto Rican, 7.3; Cuban American, 7.5; White, 8.4; and African American, 16.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Although Hispanic **infant** mortality rates are lower than those of Whites and Blacks, Hispanic **child** morbidity and mortality is 1.6 times greater for Hispanics than for the general population. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Eighty-one percent of White mothers begin prenatal care in the first trimester; 63% of Hispanic women do so, as do 61.5% of all Blacks. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991, Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1982-84)

* In 1987, 12.7% of Hispanic mothers had late or no prenatal care as compared to 5.8% of non-Hispanic mothers. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Hispanics are three times more likely than Whites to receive no prenatal care. (Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1982-84)

* Despite youthful pregnancy and lack of prenatal care, Hispanic females, especially Mexican Americans, have lower rates of premature deliveries and low birth weight. (Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1982-84)

* The incidence rate of breast cancer in Hispanic women is 48 cases per 100,000, significantly lower than the rate for non-Hispanic women. Because of lower levels of health education and little access to primary care, however, Hispanic women are 2.4 times more likely to die from cervical and breast cancer than are non-Hispanic women. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

Substance Abuse

* Between 1985 and 1990, the percentage of Hispanics ages 12 and older who had used an illicit drug in the past month decreased significantly from 10.5% to 6.6%. The percentage of those who had ever used cocaine, however, rose from 7.3% to 11.5%. (NIDA 1990 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse)

* Hispanics represented more than 17.5% of the 320,406 Americans who were in drug treatment programs in 1989. (NIDA 1990 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse)

* Alcoholism is two to three times more prevalent among Hispanics than among non-Hispanics. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Hispanic elderly are twice as likely to die from cirrhosis of the liver than are non-Hispanic elderly. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* In a 1988 study of 27 metropolitan areas in the United States, 13% of drug-related deaths occurred among Hispanics. (NIDA Notes, 1990)

AIDS and Hispanics

* Hispanics, while representing approximately 9% of the total population, account for 16% of all AIDS cases in the past ten years. (National Institute of Health, March, 1992)

* As of 1992, Hispanic women accounted for 21% of women diagnosed with AIDS, while Hispanic men accounted for 16% of all men diagnosed as having AIDS. (National Institute of Health, March, 1992)

* Twenty-five percent of all children with AIDS cases are Hispanic. (National Institute of Health, March, 1992) AIDS is the cause of death for 2.4% of Hispanic 1-14 year olds, while fewer than 1% of non-Hispanic deaths in this age group are attributed to AIDS. (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Deaths attributed to AIDS are proportionately more than twice as likely for Hispanics than for Whites. (National Commission on AIDS, January, 1991)

* AIDS is the fifth most frequent cause of death for Hispanics (7.1%) and the eighth most frequent cause of death for Whites (3.1%). (National Commission on AIDS, January, 1991)

* As of January, 1991, more than 25,000 Hispanic Americans had AIDS. Fifty percent of these contracted the AIDS virus through methods involving IV drug use. One third (32%) of all recent AIDS cases in the U.S. are related to intravenous drug use. (National Commission on AIDS, January, 1991)

* Twenty-six percent of persons with AIDS attributed to IV drug use are Hispanic, and forty-five percent are African American. (National Commission on AIDS, January, 1991)

Hispanic Elderly

* The number one cause of death for Hispanics ages 25-64 is heart disease (19%). Among the White population, heart disease was found to be the second most frequent killer for this age group (12.5%). (Health Care for Hispanic Individuals, May, 1991)

* Seventy percent of Hispanic elderly receive Social Security benefits, as compared to 92% of the rest of the population. In addition, only 19% receive a private pension, as do 45% of all elderly persons. (El Diario, 4 July, 1991)

* Twice as many Hispanic elderly die of diabetes, chronic liver disease, and cirrhosis than non-Hispanics. 1.3 million Hispanics over the age of 21, or 10% of the adult Hispanic population, have diabetes. (Statement of Antonia Novello, U.S. Surgeon General, Joint Hearing before Select Committee on Aging, U.S. House of Representatives, September, 1991)

Migrant Farm Workers

* The infant mortality rate among migrant farm workers is 25% higher than the national average. (Healthy People 2000, September, 1990)

* The average life expectancy for a migrant farm worker is 49 years, as compared to the national life expectancy of 75 years. (Healthy People 2000, September, 1990)

* The rate of parasitic infection in migrant farm workers is 50 times that of the general population. (Healthy People 2000, September, 1990)

Leading Causes of Death

* As indicated by U.S. Surgeon General Antonia Novello, the leading causes of death among Hispanics in the United States are heart disease, cancer, stroke, and accidents. (Joint Hearing before Select Committee on Aging, U.S. House of Representatives, September, 1991)

* The following chart shows leading causes of death for Hispanics and white non-Hispanics in 18 states and the District of Columbia, as a percent of total deaths in 1987. (It should be noted that more recent data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) shows the ascent of AIDS in the rank of leading causes of death for both Hispanics and non-Hispanics.)

The 10 Leading Causes of Death

Hispanics		Rank	White non-Hispanics	
Heart disease	25%	1	Heart disease	37%
Cancer	17%	2	Cancer	23%
Injuries	9%	3	Stroke	7%
Stroke	6%	4	Chronic lung disease	4%
Homicide	5%	5	Injuries	4%
Liver disease	3%	6	Pneumonia/ influenza	4%
Pneumonia/ influenza	3%	7	Diabetes	2%
Diabetes	3%	8	Suicide	2%
HIV infection	3%	9	Atherosclerosis	1%
Perinatal conditions	3%	10	Liver disease	1%

Source: Healthy People 2000, September, 1990

Availability of Hispanic Health Data

* The first comprehensive survey of Hispanic health was the Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (HHANES), conducted in 1982-84. The next HHANES survey, however, will not be completed until 1994. Other surveys and records available, such as the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), lack precise information on Hispanic subgroups or are not up to date. Additional barriers to the availability of accurate national Hispanic health information include unreliable Hispanic origin statistics reported by the states, lack of critical patient level information, and noninclusion of Hispanic identifiers. In summary, there has been insufficient analysis of Hispanic health data to provide decisive results, especially in regard to morbidity and mortality.

This publication was produced for the ASPIRA National Health Careers Program, which is 100% funded by the Health Careers Opportunity Program of the U.S. Public Health Service under grant #5-D18-MB00086-18 in the amount of $291,423 for the 1991 program year. Program Director: Hilda Crespo. Statistics were compiled by Jennifer Barr.

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The ASPIRA National Health Careers Program has been encouraging and assisting Latino and other underrepresented students to enter the health professions for the past twenty-one years. Its purpose is to increase the number of youth who graduate from medical and health professions schools and return to their communities to contribute their skills toward improving health conditions in the inner cities. It is a program of the ASPIRA Association, Inc., a national organization that promotes education and leadership development for Puerto Rican/Latino youth. ASPIRA has offices in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico, with its National Office at 1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036.

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